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->From the Editor's Keyboard

"Saying it like it is!"

"-----"

Happy Friday the 13th! If you're the superstitious type, you may as well stay indoors (but away from mirrors) today to avoid the chance of bad luck. Well, some people believe in this stuff!

No politics this week, I promise! Instead, let's go with, finally, some nice Spring weather for a change. After about nine days of cool and wet weather, the sun finally showed itself here in New England, and the temperatures climbed seasonably. Yes, we're having some showers now, but they held off until the evening. The leaves are finally coming out quickly, and Spring blooms are abundant! Even my [front] lawn is looking like a meadow needing a herd of sheep to thin out! Gotta love it!

Until next time...

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Catch Me If You Can - Now Free!

Hello !

I decided to give for free the game "Catch me if you Can" which was used in 2012 for a contest and which allowed to a french guy called ManuM to win a Falcon 030.

...so everybody can now enjoy it !

This game works from ST machines to Falcon 030, and there are 400 levels to clear.

<http://media.demozoo.org/screens/s/2d/ea/f7da.107058.png>

The game is available here:
<http://demozoo.org/productions/136315/>

Don't hesitate to leave me a little message if you enjoyed the

game!

Cooper/Paradize
STe / STf / Lynx

Atari ST Demoscene

Welcome! This is the first book especially written about the Atari ST Demoscene and its origins. Unlike any other retro book it combines a continuous essayistic storyline with a lithographic art book presentation. This full-coloured hardback book contains over 200 pages of Demoscene history and is just the beginning. The first volume enfolds the timespan from 1986 to 1990 and focuses on the development and transformation of the early core of the scene.

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/901494542/the-atari-st-and-the-creative-people-rise-of-the-d>

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Sid Meier's Civilization 6 Is Coming to PC!
"-----" Nintendo 2DS Price Cut, New Games Announced!

Atari Developing Centipede, Missile Command Movies

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

Sid Meier's Civilization 6 Is Coming to PC This October

A new Civilization strategy game is in the works by long-time developer Firaxis. Surprisingly, the unveiling of Sid Meier's Civilization VI isn't some nebulous teaser for a game players won't get for another five years: The \$60 title is coming out October 21, in just five short months.

Sid Meier's Civilization VI doesn't seem like it's out to rock the boat. It will still fundamentally be a hex-based, turn-driven, history-themed strategy game. It will, once again, allow gamers to play as a famous leader (in opposition to various others) and take a stab at building an empire. They will do so through diplomacy, research and depending on a player's

diplomatic proclivities interacting with other civilizations by way of olive branch or sword.

What's new seems centered on the way the game handles cities, whose municipal features can now spread across multiple tiles (creating, presumably, scenarios in which parts of a city could become contested).

But the studio's also highlighting significant changes to other long-standing systems. Players can now unlock boosts to speed up research. Diplomatic options now evolve in tandem with the evolutionary status of a civilization. And unit stacking, which was possible in earlier iterations of the series, is back, sort of. You can merge complementary units (say anti-tank support with infantry) in Civilization VI to form more powerful combinations.

The only downside? Like Firaxis acclaimed sci-fi strategy game XCOM 2, released last February, Civilization VI is for PC only.

[Nintendo 2DS Price Cut, New Games Announced](#)

News from Nintendo today, as the company announced that the Nintendo 2DS will drop in price to \$80 starting on May 20. The system launched in 2013, priced at \$130. The first price cut, in August 2015, brought the system down to \$100. This will be the second price cut for the entry-level device.

The 2DS plays almost the entire library of Nintendo 3DS games, but of course without the 3D effect. The system's standout feature is its design. Unlike past models, this one does not have any hinges.

Nintendo says, "the unique design is built to make it easy for smaller hands to hold." The price cut is for all 2DS systems, including the bundle that comes with Mario Kart 7.

In addition to the price drop, Nintendo announced two new games today aimed at younger gamers: Style Savvy: Fashion Forward and Disney Magical World 2.

Fashion Forward, the latest entry in the Style Savvy series, launches on August 19. The game includes more than 19,000 different articles of clothing, items, and accessories. The game also includes Amiibo support, allowing players to access Nintendo character-themed clothing and accessories.

Note that the 2DS does not have built-in NFC-reading technology like the New 3DS does, though there is a reader accessory sold separately that allows this to work on the 2DS.

As for Magical World 2, the sequel takes players on adventures in six Disney-themed worlds, one of which is based on the popular animated movie "Frozen." Some of the characters who will appear in the game include Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, Goofy, Elsa, Anna, Olaf, Ariel, Donald Duck and Daisy Duck. Magical World 2 arrives on October 14.

The 2DS is considered part of the 3DS family, which has sold

58.85 million units as of March 31. However, there is no word on how many 2DS systems specifically have been sold.

Nintendo's next system, code-named NX, is rumored to be a console/mobile hybrid, though the company has yet to share specifics. The system goes on sale in March 2017; it is not expected to show up at E3.

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->A-ONE Gaming Online - Online Users Growl & Purr!

Atari Is Developing Centipede and Missile Command Movies

Old-school video games Centipede and Missile Command are making the leap from the arcade cabinet to the big screen: Emmett/Furla/Oasis Films and Atari are partnering to produce and finance two feature films based on the 8-bit shoot 'em up adventures over the next two years, the companies have announced.

Centipede tasks players with sniping waves of cascading insects, while the Cold War-inflected Missile Command involves protecting cities from raining ICBMs. Both games launched in 1980.

The films are in the early stages of development, with no word yet on plot details, writers, or directors. Randall Emmett and George Furla will produce.

Centipede and Missile Command are part of Atari's unparalleled and rich library of popular games and we cannot wait to see these classic favorites come to life in the movies, Atari CEO Fred Chesnais said in a statement.

While video game-based movies are common in Hollywood other upcoming examples include Assassin's Creed, Warcraft, and Tomb Raider properties like Centipede and Missile Defense are less obvious candidates for adaptation because they don't offer much in the way of story or characters. Then again, studios are increasingly trying to leverage recognizable intellectual property to help sell tickets, even if the source material isn't narrative in nature. That strategy has produced hits (The Lego Movie) and flops (Battleship) and doesn't look to be going away anytime soon.

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Hacker Arrested After Exposing Flaws in Elections Site

A security researcher responsibly disclosed vulnerabilities in the poorly secured web domains of a Florida county elections, but he ended up in handcuffs on criminal hacking charges and jailed for six hours Wednesday.

Security researcher David Michael Levin, 31, of Estero, Florida was charged with three counts of gaining unauthorized access to a computer, network, or electronic instrument.

On 19 December last year, Levin tested the security of Lee County website and found a critical SQL injection vulnerability in it, which allowed him to access site's database, including username and password.

Levin was reportedly using a free SQL testing software called Havij for testing SQL vulnerabilities on the state elections website.

According to Levin, he responsibly reported vulnerabilities to the respective authorities and helped them to patch all loopholes in the elections website.

Meanwhile, Levin demonstrates his finding via an interview, but he published that video interview on YouTube in late January when authorities had already patched the reported flaws.

Levin recorded the video together with Dan Sinclair, detailing how a simple SQL injection launched against the election website led to the theft of data from the Elections' database that had no encryption at all.

As proof of concept, Levin showed him entering the username and password of Sharon Harrington, the county's Supervisor of Elections, that allowed him to gain control of a content management system (CMS) used to control the official website of Florida's Office of Elections.

However, this video was misunderstood and used as an evidence by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement officials to backfire Levin.

Almost two weeks after the video was posted on YouTube, Florida police raided Levin's house and seized his computers.

Levin was arrested and charged with allegedly breaking into a couple of elections websites in Florida. He spent six hours in jail last Wednesday before being released on a \$15,000 bond, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement officials said.

Though Florida Police claimed Levin never asked for permission prior to performing his penetration testing on any state-owned server, Sinclair said that Levin was the one who helped the authority fix the security holes in the website.

"He took usernames and passwords from the Lee County website and gained further access to areas that were password-protected," FDLE Special Agent Larry Long told the Herald Times. "The state statute is pretty clear. You need to have authorization before you can do that."

However, Sinclair reached out to The Hacker News, revealing that Mr. Levin contacted the authorities while performing his research.

"The FDLE came to Dave, and then to me about the case," Sinclair said. "We believed they were investigating the holes in the servers and the Gross Negligence. We both gave them the only information they have now that is accurate. While interviewing me, and Agent Chris Tissot kept cutting me off when I answered his questions."

"I quickly realized Tissot was not investigating any of the claims. His sole goal was to find an obscure law they could hit Dave with, to discredit the information Dave went public with (after he helped them fix the holes)."

At this point it seems that federal agents are not adequately investigating the matter, rather they are trying to prove Levin culprit in this whole event.

Conservatives Accuse Facebook of Political Bias

Facebook scrambled on Monday to respond to a new and startling line of attack: accusations of political bias.

The outcry was set off by a report on Monday morning by the website Gizmodo, which said that Facebook's team in charge of the site's trending list had intentionally suppressed articles from conservative news sources. The social network uses the trending feature to indicate the most popular news articles of the day to users.

Facebook denied the allegations after a backlash from both conservative and liberal critics erupted. NOT LEANING IN LEANING LEFT! blared the top story on The Drudge Report, a widely read website. A headline on RedState, a conservative blog, posed a question to readers: Is Facebook Suppressing RedState Content?

The journalist Glenn Greenwald, hardly a conservative ally, weighed in on Twitter: Aside from fueling right-wing persecution, this is a key reminder of dangers of Silicon Valley controlling content. And Alexander Marlow, the editor in chief of Breitbart News, a conservative-leaning publication, said the report confirmed what conservatives have long suspected.

Facebook, in response, says that it follows rigorous guidelines to ensure consistency and neutrality and that it works to be inclusive of all perspectives. We take allegations of bias very seriously, a Facebook spokeswoman said in a statement.

Facebook is a platform for people and perspectives from across the political spectrum.

The back-and-forth highlights the extent to which Facebook has now muscled its way into America's political conversation and the risks that the company faces as it becomes a central force in news consumption and production.

With more than 222 million monthly active users in the United States and Canada, the site has become a place that people flock to to find out what is going on. Last year, a study by the Pew Research Center, in collaboration with the Knight Foundation, found that 63 percent of Facebook's users considered the service a news source.

In April, Facebook embraced this role openly, releasing a video to implore people to search Facebook to discover the other side of the story. Politicians have increasingly shared their messages through the social network.

It's not that Facebook has changed fundamentally over the past four, eight years, said Paul Brewer, director of the University of Delaware Center for Political Communication. It's the sheer volume of communication that's taking place, and it's that politicians know that they need to be using Facebook now more than ever before to communicate.

As it has become more influential, Facebook has taken pains to say that it is not an echo chamber of similar opinions. In a peer-reviewed study published last year, Facebook's data scientists analyzed how 10.1 million of the most partisan American users on the social network navigated the site over a six-month period. They found that people's networks of friends and the articles they saw were skewed toward their ideological preferences but that the effect was more limited than the worst case some theorists had predicted, in which people would see almost no information from the other side.

Yet Gizmodo's report raises questions about the effects that Facebook's staff members and their biases even unconscious ones have on the social network.

While Facebook has pledged to sponsor both the Democratic and Republican national conventions, the company's top executives have not been shy about expressing where their political sympathies lie.

At a Facebook conference in April, Mark Zuckerberg, the company's chief executive, warned of "fearful voices building walls," in reference to Donald Trump, the probable Republican presidential candidate.

The allegations against Facebook also put the spotlight on how it chooses which news articles to show users under the trending function on desktop computers, trending displays on the right side of screens; on cellphones, it appears when users search.

Facebook has long described its trending feature as largely automatic. The topics you see are based on a number of factors including engagement, timeliness, pages you've liked and your

location, according to a description on Facebook's site.

The trending feature is curated by a team of contract employees, according to two former Facebook employees who worked on it and who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of nondisclosure agreements. They said they considered themselves members of a newsroom-like operation, where editorial discretion was not novel but was an integral part of the process.

Any suppression, the former employees said, was based on perceived credibility: any articles judged by curators to be unreliable or poorly sourced, whether left-leaning or right-leaning, were avoided, though this was a personal judgment call.

The perception of Facebook as a more conventional news operation opens it to a more familiar line of criticism, which has been mounted against news organizations left and right, large and small, for decades. According to a report last year by Pew, only 17 percent surveyed said that technology companies had a negative influence on the country. For the news media, that number was 65 percent and rising.

The agenda-setting power of a handful of companies like Facebook and Twitter should not be underestimated, said Jonathan Zittrain, a professor of computer science and law at Harvard University. These services will be at their best when they are explicitly committed to serving the interests of their users rather than simply offering a service whose boundaries for influence are unknown and ever-changing.

By late Monday, users on the social network looking for more information about the Gizmodo report did not have to look far: It was among the top articles trending on Facebook.

Twitter May Have Cut Spy Agencies Off From Its Flood of Data

At Twitter's behest, US intelligence agencies have lost access to Dataminr, a company that turns social media data into an advanced notification system, according to the Wall Street Journal. While that may sound like a win for privacy, it's a bit more complicated in practice.

The move leaves government officials without a valuable tool. Somewhat less clear is what sort of stand, if any, Twitter is taking.

There are a few threads to untangle here, and plenty of unanswered questions. Dataminr has been in business since 2009, and its main gig is scouring social media for patterns that might indicate breaking news, using algorithms to give those patterns a context and identity, and delivering the result in the form of a real-time breaking news alert. It's like when you get NYT news alerts on your phone, but on big-data steroids, and only available to clients with a big enough checkbook.

Until recently, according to the Journal, various US defense

agencies were among those clients.

From the government perspective, it's a good tool, because it gives real-time alerts to things that are happening before anyone really knows what's going on, says Aki Peritz, a former CIA counterterrorism expert and current adjunct professor at American University. We want to allow law enforcement and the intelligence services to know bad things are happening in real time.

In addition to those real-time benefits the Journal reports that Dataminr, in fact, alerted the US intelligence committee to last fall's Paris attacks it's important to note that those agencies are also indirect investors in Dataminr, through a venture-capital program called In-Q-Tel. That investment reportedly allowed for a pilot program, which has concluded.

When Twitter tells Dataminr to jump, its algorithms calculate exactly how high.

So what's the issue, and more specifically, where does Twitter come in? Like the intelligence community, Twitter is an investor in Dataminr, though its five-percent stake doesn't carry nearly as much weight as the firehose it provides. Dataminr is the only outside company with full access to Twitter's real-time data and permission to sell that data. Without that access, its business model would be directly threatened. So when Twitter tells it to jump, its algorithms calculate exactly how high.

Dataminr uses public Tweets to sell breaking news alerts to media organizations such as Dow Jones and government agencies such as the World Health Organization, for non-surveillance purposes, says a Twitter spokesperson. We have never authorized Dataminr or any third party to sell data to a government or intelligence agency for surveillance purposes. This is a longstanding Twitter policy, not a new development.

Further complicating matters is that the Department of Homeland Security reportedly has an existing contract with Dataminr as well, unaffected by the current imbroglio. Neither Dataminr nor DHS immediately responded to inquiries.

If Twitter wants to distance itself from the government's surveillance apparatus, it's picked an opportune time to do so. Apple recently won a high-stakes face-off with the FBI over whether the feds could compel it to write software that undermines an iPhone's safety, and WhatsApp turned on end-to-end encryption by default for a billion users worldwide. Pushing back against the intelligence community is trending.

Yet there are substantive differences between Twitter's actions and those of its contemporaries. Apple was fighting a potentially dangerous legal precedent, and the encryption wave protects digital conversations that have a reasonable expectation of privacy. Dataminr, though, packages tweets, which are public.

It's merely a way to sort tweets into a way that makes sense for the clients, whether it's a hedge fund, or the media, or an intelligence service, says Peritz. The information is searchable to anyone; Dataminr has just concocted a better way to search,

and to draw conclusions from the results.

Privacy advocates argue that it's not so simple, and that severing Dataminr's ties with the intelligence community is clearly in line with Twitter's long-time stance on user protection.

The company has responsibilities to respect human rights, says Peter Micek, a lawyer with digital rights group Access Now.

Twitter does not want to aid surveillance beyond what it's legally required to.

Micek notes that this position isn't just fluff; it's part of Twitter's developer agreement. It states, along with a few other restrictions designed to safeguard users, that its partners will not conduct and your services will not provide analyses or research that isolates a small group of individuals or any single individual for any unlawful or discriminatory purposes.

This, though, somehow manages to raise even more questions. If Twitter has this clause, why did Dataminr partner with defense agencies in the first place? Why does it still contract with DHS? Does an early-notification system, still widely available to private companies, constitute the sorts of abuses Twitter's developer agreement specifies? And what does cutting off the intelligence community accomplish beyond making them slower to respond to international incidents?

If Twitter has this clause, why did Dataminr partner with defense agencies in the first place?

Let's say Dataminr works with CNN, and then CNN puts something up on the screen, and people in the government see it and learn about it that way, says Peritz. Why cut out the US government in the first place? It's internally illogical.

That the data is both public and beneficial is not enough to sway Micek, who says that while the data is technically public, the sort of intelligence garnered by Dataminr should require a warrant for the government to attain.

It's easy to say that this information is already out there, but access to that fire hose of data allows upstream collection that the government does, and provides an unprecedented scope and scale of surveillance.

It's a thorny issue, made even more so by the lack of clarity from the involved parties. If Dataminr simply sorts public knowledge, then denying the intelligence community that information makes little sense, especially given that DHS still has access. If, on the other hand, Dataminr provides a level of insight that should only be accessible with a warrant, giving that same information to an unregulated hedge fund seems problematic as well.

For now, at least, the government will have to go back to combing through Twitter on its own. It's not the worst fate. It's just an odd one.

Mozilla Asks Court To Disclose Firefox Exploit Used by FBI To Hack Tor Users

Mozilla has filed a brief with a U.S. District Court asking the FBI to disclose the potential vulnerabilities in its Firefox browser that the agency exploited to unmask TOR users in a criminal investigation.

Last year, the FBI used a zero-day flaw to hack TOR browser and de-anonymize users visiting child sex websites.

Now, Mozilla is requesting the government to ask the FBI about the details of the hack so that it can ensure the security of its Firefox browser.

TOR is an anonymity software that provides a safe haven to human rights activists, government, journalists but also is a place where drugs, child pornography, assassins for hire and other illegal activities has allegedly been traded.

TOR Browser Bundle is basically an Internet browser based on Mozilla Firefox configured to protect the user's anonymity via Tor and Vidalia.

In 2015, the FBI seized computer servers running the world's largest dark web child pornography site Playpen from a web host in Lenoir, North Carolina. However, after the seizure, the site was not immediately shut down.

Instead, the FBI agents continued to run Playpen from its own servers in Newington, Virginia, from February 20 to March 4. During that period, the agency deployed its so-called Network Investigative Technique (NIT) to identify the real IP addresses of users visiting this illegal site.

Recently, an investigation revealed that Matthew J. Edman, a former employee of TOR Project, created malware for the FBI that has been used by US law enforcement and intelligence agencies in several investigations to unmask Tor users.

The FBI hacked more than a thousand computers in the US alone and over three thousand abroad. The Internet Service Providers (ISPs) were then forced to hand over the target customer's details, following their arrest.

Two months back, a judge ordered the FBI to reveal the complete source code for the TOR exploit that not only affected the Tor Browser, which would have likely been used to hack visitors of PlayPen, but also Firefox.

Here's what Mozilla's top lawyer Denelle Dixon-Thayer explained in a blog post:

"The Tor Browser is partially based on our Firefox browser code. Some have speculated, including members of the defense team, that the vulnerability might exist in the portion of the Firefox browser code relied on by the Tor Browser. At this point, no one (including us) outside the government knows what

vulnerability was exploited and whether it resides in any of our code base."

Mozilla has now filed a motion with a US district court in Washington, asking the government to disclose the vulnerability within 14 days before any disclosure to the Defendant requiring the FBI to hand over the source code of the exploit to the defense team.

It is because Mozilla wants time to analyze the vulnerability, prepare a patch, and update its products before any malicious actor could exploit the flaw to compromise its Firefox browser, which is being used by millions of people.

Google Shakes Up Antivirus Industry

Google is in the process of limiting access to a widely used database of computer viruses and malicious software in a move that is having a ripple effect across the cybersecurity industry.

VirusTotal, a subsidiary of the search giant, said last week that it was attempting to curtail abuses of the database by mandating that any companies that access it must also participate in the service to help it grow.

VirusTotal receives about 1.2 million files each day from its free, public website that will scan against some 60 antivirus programs from leading makers such as Kaspersky Lab, Symantec, and Intel.

Companies pay to receive access to those files full of potentially new viruses and data on the consistency of malware scanners. Until the policy change, VirusTotal did not require companies to participate in scanning new files, meaning they did not add to the larger pool of malware information for the industry.

Many cybersecurity industry experts say that amounted to getting something for nothing.

What's more, industry insiders worry that access to VirusTotal let some antivirus companies develop software that only checked to see if VirusTotal had encountered the file before, rather than root out new strains of malware to protect their customers.

"If the rumors are true, these companies are selling a false sense of security," said Bogdan Botezatu, a senior analyst at BitDefender, an antivirus firm that participates on VirusTotal.

Ideally, he said, the community of cybersecurity firms would collaborate on creating the most up-to-date information on viruses in service of improving the overall industry, and keeping consumers safer. "VirusTotal is so important because antiviruses only work on trust and cooperation."

"For this ecosystem to work," VirusTotal said in a May 4 blog post, "everyone who benefits from the community also needs to give back to the community."

VirusTotal did not say how many current companies it would limit from accessing the library, and Google did not respond to a request for additional comment about the new VirusTotal policies. But the changes are already having a tangible effect on the cybersecurity industry.

According to Reuters, VirusTotal has shut out the cybersecurity firm SentinelOne, which promoted its use of the tool in marketing materials. Representatives from Crowdstrike told Reuters it was currently negotiating a way to continue using the service.

Some firms have no qualms about leaving VirusTotal.

"People were saying that we were using VirusTotal to scan files, which we don't," said Stuart McClure, chief executive officer of Cylance, a firm that promotes its use of artificial intelligence to detect cyberthreats. "This is good chance for us to educate people on what we actually do. VirusTotal's policies won't affect us at all."

Still, he said, many companies may have had good reason not to share results of their own virus scans (often called "convictions") with the competition. "They would steal all of our convictions without giving us credit," he said.

The changes to VirusTotal will not effect how the public can use the service to search files and websites for viruses and other malicious software.

Reaction to Facebook Reactions: Meh

According to a new study, Facebook reactions, like love and anger, are not being widely used at this point.

Facebook users have some new reactions to work with, but most are sticking to the tried and true "Like" button, according to a new study from social media analytics firm Quintly.

Quintly analyzed 130,000 Facebook posts and found that, 97 percent of interactions were likes, comments, and shares, rather than the new options that allow folks to convey love, laughter, happiness, shock, sadness, or anger about a particular post.

"It is clear that Facebook Reactions are not used very frequently by the average [person] at this point," Quintly Communication Manager Julian Gottke writes in a blog post. Of the interactions Quintly analyzed, 76.4 percent were likes, 14 percent were shares, and 7.2 percent were comments, while just 2.4 percent were something else.

That's not great news for marketers, which may be counting on those new reactions to get a better sense of how their content is perceived, Quintly points out.

The social network officially rolled out the new symbols in February; "love" is the most popular, Quintly reports.

Videos, however, receive more varied reactions than other types of posts. Users, for instance, react to videos with the "wow" reaction "significantly more often" compared to images, Quintly says. The same is true for the "angry" reaction, which users are twice as likely to use after watching a video.

Another interesting finding about the angry reaction: Users are hesitant to post it and other negative reactions.

"Until the launch of Facebook Reactions it was hardly possible to express a negative perception. Now it is, but the share of people using it is very low," Gottke writes. "Facebook users prefer to interact with content that entertains, is funny or just generates positive emotions."

Mozilla Rehashes Firefox Feature-testing Program

Mozilla yesterday cranked up Test Pilot - restoring a 2015 project with a name from 2009 - to collect feedback on proposed new features for its flagship Firefox browser.

Test Pilot, which Mozilla dabbled with six years ago, was then aimed at gathering data on how people were using the web in general, Firefox in particular. In its original format, Test Pilot used a Firefox add-on to collect browsing and usage data, and provide tools to answer feedback questions.

Mozilla's goal this time around the Test Pilot block is different.

"Test Pilot is a way for you to try out experimental features and let us know what you think," Nick Nguyen, vice president of Firefox, wrote in a Tuesday post to a company blog.

In fact, while Test Pilot is the project's name, it's actually based on a 2015 concept that Mozilla called "Idea Town." Mozilla renamed Idea Town as Test Pilot in January.

Idea Town was billed as a way for Firefox users to try out new features, and for developers to evaluate user reaction before deciding whether to stick the proposed tools into the browser.

The first three features run through Test Pilot were a visual-heavy new tab page, dubbed "Activity Stream," that displayed thumbnails of both frequently-visited sites and selected past pages from the browser's history and bookmark lists; "Tab Center," which shoved tabs into a vertical stack on the left rather than show them along the top; and "Universal Search," which combined Firefox's current dual search fields.

Other browsers adopted a single search field long ago; Firefox was the last of the top five to stick with the old-school split search.

Desktop Firefox users, whether running the browser in Windows, OS X or Linux, can participate in Test Pilot by downloading the

add-on. A Firefox Account - typically used for synchronizing the browser across multiple devices and platforms - is required.

Nguyen warned users to expect problems with the features put through the Test Pilot mill. "As you're experimenting with new features, you might experience some bugs or lose some of the polish from the general Firefox release, so Test Pilot allows you to easily enable or disable features at any time," he said.

Although Mozilla, like all browser makers, distributes more than one version of Firefox at a time - running from the least-polished Nightly build to the production-quality Release edition - neither the original Test Pilot or the later Idea Town were popular among users.

Test Pilot aims to change that. "Feedback and data from Test Pilot will help determine which features ultimately end up in a Firefox release for all to enjoy," Nguyen said.

More information about Test Pilot has been published on Mozilla's website.

Windows Has Finally Fixed Its Awful Auto-update System

Anyone who's used a Windows PC for more than 20 minutes has probably run into the scheduled updater. This evil snippet of code will, on occasion, forcibly restart your PC, no matter how urgent a piece of work might be.

In the latest beta version of Windows 10, Microsoft has revealed how it will fix the auto-install with a new feature called "Active Hours." It still doesn't allow you to turn off auto-install - Microsoft is determined that you stay up to date - but it does the next best thing.

When enabled, Active Hours lets you set the hours during which you must use your computer, and no updates will ever be installed during that time period. No, you can't just set your Active Hours to be 23 hours and 59 minutes of the day - it tops out at 10 hours, which should nonetheless be enough to cover most people's day jobs.

To set up Active Hours, you first need to be on the Insider beta program. Assuming you're running the latest beta build, follow these steps:

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Go to the Settings app (Windows +I)
Open Updates and Security
Click "change active hours" to set your preferred period of time
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I think this strikes a decent balance between user-friendliness, and still keeping everyone's systems up to date. I've been shafted by a Windows Update at a highly inconvenient time before (nothing like a spontaneous reboot in the middle of a Samsung press conference!). But I also appreciate the value of keeping everyone up to date, especially at a time when Windows zero-day security flaws pop up with alarming regularity.

Why Internet Links Are Blue, And What Google's 'Black' Experiment Means

Google's search experiment where text links in search results appear black and not the traditional blue is freaking people out, and with good reason. The blue link (underlined or not) has been around for so long that it's become borderline dogma for web design.

For as long as there has been a public Internet, links or, more accurately, hyperlinks have been blue and often underlined. In 1993 (or '94), at the dawn of the modern World Wide Web, Tim Berners-Lee, who is often regarded as the father of the Internet, chose blue underlined text because, it is believed, it stood out from all the black text surrounding it.

The earliest web browsers, including Mosaic, used blue link text. Berners-Lee, though, did not invent hyperlink text. That concept goes back another 30 years to roughly 1965 and Ted Nelson, who came up with the term hypertext and, while a professor at Vassar College, used it in the title of a paper, *The Hypertext Proceedings of the World Documentation Federation*, 1965.

Nelson is a brilliant technologist (though not a programmer), prolific speaker, writer and famously spearheaded the ill-fated Project Xanadu, which actually predates the term Hypertext, a universal hypertext library that was intended to be a better Internet organizing principle than the World Wide Web.
You're asking the wrong question

Now in his late 70s and working with The Internet Archive, Nelson also still posts regularly on Twitter, which is how I tracked him down. I wondered if Nelson had any thoughts on Google's experiments with black links and sent him an exploratory email that read, in part:

You're often recognized as the father of hyperlink text, so I was wondering if I could chat with you today about the origin of hyperlink text and, more specifically, the default style (blue, often underlined).

To my surprise, Nelson answered quickly, but was not inspired by my query. He wrote.

No time to chat. Today's web has so little to do with my concepts that there is no possible answer to the question.

Undeterred, I tried a different angle.

That's fair, but in your original hyperlink concepts, were the links always blue and, if so, does that have more to do with early computer programming than a stylistic choice?

This turned out to be a poorly considered question and, in hindsight, his response makes perfect sense.

Links were visible straps between pages.

Color screens were not on the horizon.

Your thoughts area (sic) really trapped in today.

Sorry, but cannot reply again.

He was right, of course. I'd sent him an embarrassingly myopic query. For Nelson, hyperlinks were about organizing and connecting associated information. It was before the dawn of the Internet's predecessor Arpanet (1969) and decades before we saw the web as an information superhighway. What's more, a computer screen in 1965 was monochromatic—usually black and white or black and green. At best, you could represent hypertext by underlining the text. Colors were impossible.

By 1994, though, Berners-Lee was blessed with color screens. Most of his early screenshots include blue links and an image of the Mosaic Browser, the National Center for Supercomputing Application's cross-platform web browser used blue links and, when you opened it, actually explained what you were supposed to do with the blue, underlined text:

Each highlighted phrase (underlined or color) is a hyperlink to another document or information resource somewhere on the Internet. Single click on any hyperlinked phrase to follow the link.

As for Berners-Lee, whom I tried to contact for this article, he really doesn't know where the blue came from. In a lengthy FAQ that Berners-Lee on The World Wide Web Consortium, he explained:

There is no reason why one should use color, or blue, to signify links: it is just a default. I think the first WWW client (WorldWideWeb I wrote for the NeXT) used just underline to represent link, as it was a spare emphasis form which isn't used much in real documents. Blue came in as browsers went color—I don't remember which was the first to use blue...

My guess is that blue is the darkest color and so threatens the legibility least. I used green whenever I could in the early WWW design, for nature and because it is supposed to be relaxing. Robert Cailliau made the WWW icon in many colors but chose green as he had always seen W in his head as green.

Even though Berners-Lee clearly preferred green, the folklore that he chose blue because it's the darkest color (aside from black) persists.

What is certain though, is that blue links have been the default link style on the web for more than 20 years. Beyond aesthetics, it's shorthand for click here. Links inside paragraphs of gray text serve as online escape portals to more valuable or interesting text and graphics. Hiding them behind similarly colored text, as Google's search experiment appears to do, may be a bridge too far for many. However, considering Google's vast influence on our collective Internet experience, it could start a link revolution that we'll be powerless to stop.

A Google spokesperson more or less confirmed the existence of these tests with this official comment, "We're always running many small-scale experiments with the design of the results page. We're not quite sure that black is the new blue."

As for the fathers of hypertext and the Internet, they appear to be staying mum on the matter.

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